



POCKET PC Expert

Steve Clack provides all the information you need on two products that will upgrade your standard personal information management software to something more than a mere electronic Filofax



ACTIVESYNC 4.1 UPDATE

Following Microsoft's warning of potential "connection problems" with its recent ActiveSync 4.0 release, version 4.1 is now available to download for free from www.microsoft.com/mobile. Unfortunately, the new version is still intended for use with the latest Windows Mobile 5.0 devices only, leaving those of us who run Pocket PC 2003SE and earlier to continue using ActiveSync 3.8.

The new version includes a 'Partnership wizard', which simplifies the setup process, plus faster data transfer and the ability to sync contact photos from Microsoft Outlook on the desktop. Microsoft has removed the option to remote sync over a Wi-Fi or LAN connection, apparently following feedback from enterprise customers regarding security concerns.

FIRST RUMOURS OF WINDOWS MOBILE 6.0

Windows Mobile 5.0 is only just appearing on new Pocket PC devices, but the first rumours of its successor are already emerging. Windows Mobile 6.0, codenamed Photon, will operate on both traditional PDAs and smartphones, rather than using two separate variants of the operating system.

Although reportedly "years away" from release, an interim upgrade is due, in the form of Crossbow, a Second Edition version of Windows Mobile 5.0.

MICROSOFT IN COURT OVER PATENT INFRINGEMENT

Wireless email company Visto is taking Microsoft to court over allegations that Windows Mobile 5.0 infringes a number of its patents relating to remote access to email and other information. As well as seeking financial recompense, the company is hoping for a permanent injunction that prevents Microsoft using its mobile email technology on Pocket PCs.

"Microsoft has a reputation for entering a market and acquiring the technology of others, in some cases misappropriating intellectual property," said Visto's Daniel Méndez. "We will not allow them to do that to us."

Aside from multimedia wizardry and all the less obvious things you can do with a modern PDA, most of us buy a Pocket PC primarily as an electronic Filofax: a means of storing addresses, appointments and things to do. The built-in Calendar, Contacts and Tasks applications are all adequate but, as with almost all the software that comes with your Pocket PC, there are much more powerful and flexible alternatives available.

The two main alternatives to the standard PIM suite are Pocket Informant (www.pocketinformant.com/uk) and Agenda Fusion (www.developerone.com). The two are perpetually vying for top position. Both offer a huge array of features beyond those of the built-in applications, and both cost \$30 (around £17), which is quite a bargain for such sophisticated software. Both programs replace all three of the standard applications, enabling you to access all your addresses, appointments and to-do items within a single program.

The most important point is that they don't require you to re-enter, import or export your existing data in any way. They use the information that's already stored on your PDA, but give you more ways to view it and offer data input screens that are better laid out and easier to navigate. Your information will still synchronise with Microsoft Outlook using ActiveSync, and all your existing entries will be present and correct from the moment you first access them in either Pocket Informant or Agenda Fusion. Similarly, if later you decide to remove the software for any reason, you can still access all your PIM information using Calendar, Contacts and Tasks, just as before.

POCKET INFORMANT

Pocket Informant is currently the most feature-packed of the two programs. Although delving into its menus reveals a daunting array of configuration

options, most people can ignore these and leave the program at its default settings. Rather than making you jump between Calendar and Tasks to check your appointments and to-do items for a given day, Pocket Informant has a variety of calendar views that you can set to show all your day's commitments together, which is much more flexible than relying on the Today screen for a basic summary that covers only the current day.

As with Agenda Fusion, Pocket Informant provides numerous ways of filtering your data, so you can opt to see just appointments and tasks in the 'personal' and 'holiday' categories, for example, or all your tasks for the next month, conveniently sorted by whatever criteria you choose.

The built-in Calendar application provides only a handful of views to display your forthcoming commitments. By contrast, Pocket Informant offers complete customisation of its agenda, day, week and month views, and you can create saved versions of each that contain whatever settings and filters you wish. This is perfect if you want to see only work-related appointments and tasks while you're at work and only those in personal categories while at home. You could even save a Monday-to-Friday version of your week view for use when you're at work, and a seven-day version for general use. In fact, when it comes to separating your work and home-related agendas, both products are sure to make your life easier.

One feature that's unique to Pocket Informant is the Timeline view. This lets you see an entire week's worth of forthcoming commitments for several categories at a time, using a tabular grid layout to display tasks as well as allocated time slots for appointments.

Pocket Informant can save you lots of time when entering new appointments, addresses and tasks, with neatly tabbed input screens that minimise the amount of time you have to spend

REVIEW MULTIFUNCTION STYLUS

LAMY Accent Palladium

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$69 inc delivery (around £40)

DETAILS www.styluscentral.com

For all but the most minimal use, the built-in stylus that comes with most Pocket PCs is uncomfortable to hold and barely adequate for the job. If you feel like splashing out on a stylish and comfortable alternative, Lamy's Accent Palladium is just the job.



This is a proper four-way pen rather than a mere stylus, with retractable blue and red ballpoint pens and a 0.7mm clutch pencil as well as a stylus tip. Aside from the sleek brushed palladium-metal finish, the grip area is rubberised, making this pen exceptionally pleasant to hold.

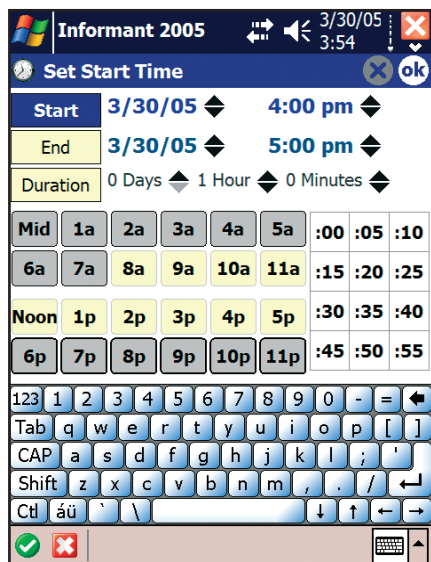
At \$60 plus \$9 international shipping, this is quite an extravagance, but it makes a perfect gift and you can buy refills for the pens and pencil, so it should last for years.



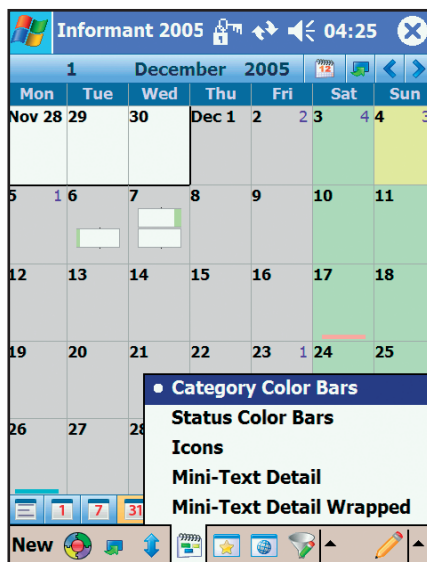
Superb quality; very comfortable to hold



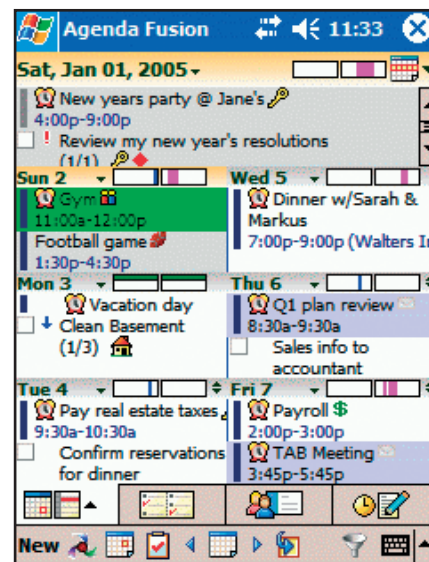
Pricy



▲ Pocket Informant's time picker makes it easy to enter appointment details in a hurry



▲ Set Pocket Informant's month view to show icons and colour bars or descriptions of the month's events



▲ Agenda Fusion's Week view gives a good overview of forthcoming appointments and tasks

scrolling through items you don't need. This is useful when entering new appointments, thanks to a handy time 'picker' screen that lets you assign start, end and duration times with just a couple of taps rather than having to enter everything through the rather basic Calendar dialogs.

To speed things up even more, you can save the text for commonly used appointment and task types into reusable templates, then enter them as you need them with just a couple of taps on a pull-down list. Aside from its advanced PIM features, Pocket Informant also includes a tab from which you can access all your Note entries, complete with attached alarms.

Other useful features enable you to create links between other PIM entries and files, so you can go into a meeting and pull up all related

contact information, tasks and document files with just a couple of taps.

AGENDA FUSION

Agenda Fusion shares most of Pocket Informant's features and provides a similar array of views and helpful data input screens. Some of its input screens aren't quite as comprehensive, but overall the program is slightly less complicated, making it easier for novices to get to grips with.

One feature of Agenda Fusion that its competitor lacks is a Projects view, which lets you create new projects and attach all related contact information, appointments and tasks. What's more, you can set up a background timer whenever you're working on that particular project, and Agenda Fusion will build up a summary of all the time

you've spent on it, neatly itemised. If your work is centred around billable time or project-related work, this compelling feature makes Agenda Fusion the better program for you.

If you find the built-in Pocket PC PIM suite a little lacklustre, try one or both of these alternatives. If you keep a busy timetable of appointments and tasks, either one should prove invaluable. **CS**

CONTACT

POCKET PC EXPERT

If there is anything you would like to see covered in *Pocket PC Expert*, please contact us at the address below

pocketpc@computershopper.co.uk

REVIEW E-BOOK/NEWSREADER SOFTWARE

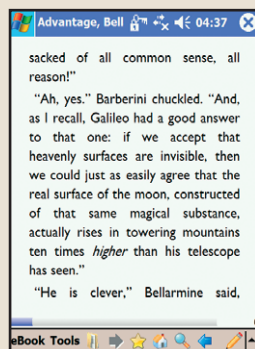
MOBIPOCKET Reader Professional 5

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$20 (around £11), Standard version free

DETAILS www.mobipocket.com

Mobipocket has always been a solid product for reading electronic books and AvantGo-style newsfeeds, but until recently it hadn't seen a significant update for months. The latest version brings a number of welcome improvements, including support for VGA-resolution devices, a more attractive bar display that shows your progress through a book and an overhauled desktop PC companion program. The ugly presentation of your e-book collection using a page of hyperlinks has been replaced with an attractive list view that makes it easy to group your books logically and keep everything in order.



▲ Mobipocket now offers superb hi-res VGA support

The collection of books available from www.mobipocket.com is growing at a respectable rate, and it offers a better array of dictionaries and reference works than its two major competitors, eReader and Microsoft Reader. A quick tap on any word in the text gives you immediate access to the currently selected dictionary, encyclopedia and so on, and there's excellent support for foreign language references, too. Unlike Microsoft Reader, the software doesn't include a free dictionary, but the options available for Mobipocket are far better, including the superb 240,000-word *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (\$30), so you're not limited to American spellings as you are with Microsoft Reader.

Beyond e-books, you can download hundreds of newsfeeds ranging from the BBC and *New York Times* to PDA-related and entertainment news. It's much the same as AvantGo, which is already included with all new Pocket PC devices, but Mobipocket integrates your news and e-books more conveniently under a single package,

with the added benefit that you have access to all Mobipocket's reference tools, bookmarking and annotation features. Mobipocket also includes excellent support for inline graphics, so you can zoom in to any images that accompany the text and scroll around them with ease.

Although you can buy and download e-books from the Mobipocket website directly with Mobipocket Reader – provided you have a suitable wireless connection – you can't currently download newsfeeds in the same way, making it necessary to ActiveSync with your PC in order to get daily news updates, which is a real pity.

If you don't feel like paying \$20, a free Standard version of the reader is available. This lacks features such as the ability to highlight text, add your own notes, use landscape screen orientation and auto-scroll through documents, but it still comes with the all-important bundled desktop companion.

✓ Unparalleled dictionary support; integrates e-books and newsfeeds nicely

✗ Needs PC companion software for newsfeeds